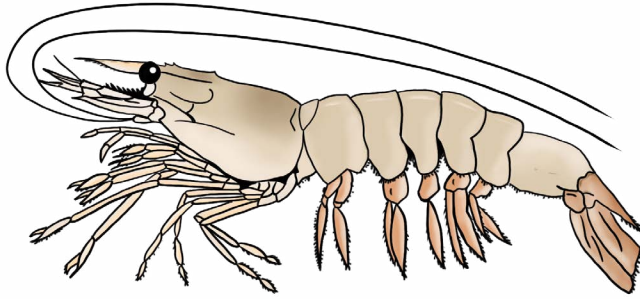


Shrimp in South Carolina

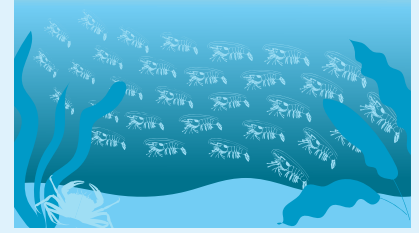


Thousands of shrimp species can be found across the globe with a wide variety of adaptations to survive almost any marine ecosystem, from freshwater lakes to hydrothermal vents. Shrimp have a thin, almost transparent exoskeleton, long antennae, slender legs and a fan-like tail. In South Carolina, we are most familiar with the two shrimp species that can populate our tidal creeks and nearshore waters and are a key component of the seafood industry: brown shrimp and white shrimp (both part of the penaeid shrimp family). However, our waters are also home to lesser known shrimp species including mantis shrimp, snapping shrimp, grass shrimp and tiger shrimp.

Shrimp can move in many different ways including using their walking legs, swimming legs or with a sudden tail snap. While shrimp can walk short distances, they will swim as far as five miles a day during migration. They can also use their fan-like tail to rapidly swim backward, a helpful skill for evading predators. Shrimp are bottom-feeding omnivores that eat both plants and animals including worms, amphipods, crustacean larvae, isopods, small fishes and crabs. Some shrimp even eat other shrimp. In turn, shrimp are an important food source for a wide range of animals from fish to whales to humans.

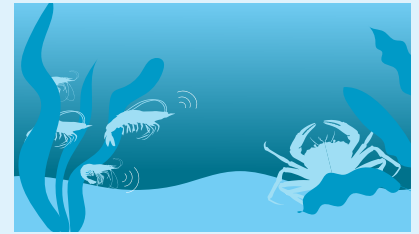
Brown shrimp, white shrimp and pink shrimp have similar life cycles, typically living less than two years. Adult females usually spawn in nearshore environments close to the beach and up to several miles offshore. A single female produces between 500,000 and 1,000,000 eggs at a time and may spawn several times a year. Brown shrimp spawn during the fall, whereas white shrimp typically spawn in the spring and early summer. The exact spawning period depends on water temperature. Postlarval shrimp migrate from offshore waters to salt marsh tidal creeks where they will spend two to three months growing to about 4in long. During high tide, juveniles move into the marsh grass to feed and escape predators. At low tide, shrimp gather in creek beds.

Shrimp Behaviors



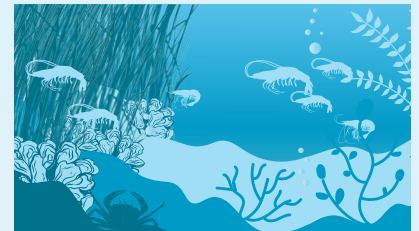
Schooling

Shrimp travel in schools to protect themselves from predators.



Communicating

Some shrimp socialize and intimidate other marine life through snapping and clicking.



Migrating

Shrimp move between environments including offshore waters and tidal creeks throughout their lifecycle.



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The Shrimp Fishery

Shrimp are one of America's most valuable and popular seafoods. In South Carolina, local shrimp can be enjoyed eight to nine months out of the year from May until December or January. To catch shrimp recreationally, you must have a saltwater fishing license. Brown shrimp can be caught in our tidal creeks using cast nets and seines starting in early June. White shrimp can be caught in our creeks in late July or early August until they move to the open ocean in the fall.

Shrimp boats are an iconic part of the southern fishing fleet. Commercial shrimp boats can be spotted leaving coastal estuaries and inlets in the early morning for a day trawling offshore, typically within three or four miles of the beach. The commercial shrimp trawl fishery has three seasons. Opening dates are recommended by biologists at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) after determining that an adequate supply of eggs has been spawned to produce a good fall harvest. You can support local fishermen and avoid the high carbon footprint of imported seafood by purchasing local shrimp at seafood markets along the coast.

SCDNR biologists monitor our shrimp populations to ensure that our fishery remains stable for years to come. Researchers based in Charleston conduct a monthly trawl in nearby rivers to measure the abundance and size of shrimp in certain areas, monitor for parasites and determine which shrimp species are found in particular areas. These efforts aim to ensure South Carolina maintains healthy shrimp populations for years to come.



Lesser known shrimp species in SC waters



Mantis Shrimp
Native species



Snapping Shrimp
Native species



Grass Shrimp
Native species



Tiger Shrimp
Invasive species

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